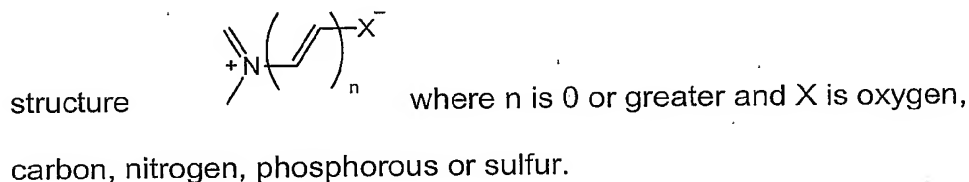
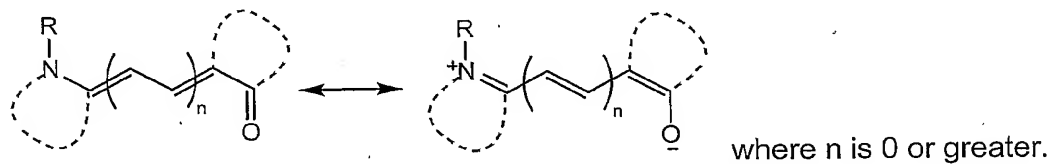


WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1) A composition comprising a mobile phase and a microbe-sensitive colorant that undergoes a visually detectable change in the presence of a microbe.
- 2) The composition of claim 1 where the microbe is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, fungi and viruses.
- 3) The composition of claim 1 wherein said mobile phase is a liquid.
- 4) The composition of claim 1 wherein said mobile phase is a disinfectant.
- 5) The composition of claim 1 wherein said mobile phase is a gel
- 6) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant is a solvatochromic dye.
- 7) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant is a zwitterionic dye of

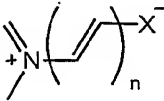


- 8) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant is merocyanine of structure

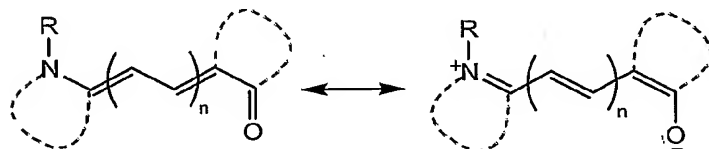


- 9) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant is selected from the group consisting of Reichart's dye, merocyanine dyes, 4-[2-N-substituted-1,4-hydropyridin-4-ylidene)ethylidene]cyclohexa-2,5-dien-1-one, red pyrazolone dyes, azomethine dyes, indoaniline dyes, diazamerocyanine dyes, and mixtures thereof.

- 10) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant is present in an amount between 0.01 and 10 weight percent.
- 11) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant changes color in less than one minute after exposure to microbes.
- 5 12) The composition of claim 1 wherein said colorant changes color at a rate proportional to the concentration of said microbes.
- 13) The composition of claim 1 wherein the amount of microbe present is proportional to a quantity of colorant that undergoes said change.
- 14) The composition of claim 1 wherein said composition is allowed to dry on a solid surface.
- 10 15) The composition of claim 14 wherein said solid surface is selected from the group consisting of wipers, paper, stickers, tissue, tissue packaging and counter-tops.
- 16) A lateral flow device for the detection of microbes comprising a membrane having a detection zone and a control zone, and a wicking pad wherein said detection zone includes a microbe-sensitive colorant that undergoes a visually detectable change in the presence microbes.
- 15 17) A method for the detection of microbes on surfaces comprising the steps of applying a solution containing a microbe-sensitive colorant to a surface and observing a visually detectable change indicating the presence of microbes.
- 20 18) The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of allowing said solution to dry, thus producing a dried residue of said dye containing solution.

- 19) The method of claim 17 wherein said dye has the formula  where $n = 0$ or greater and X is oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, phosphorous, or carbon.

- 20) The method of claim 17 wherein said dye has the formula



Where $n = 0$ or greater